

## Ask the U.S. Embassy

April 24, 2013

“My friend received a visa from the US Embassy, but was denied admission to the US. Isn’t the visa a permission to enter”?

Most applicants at the U.S. Embassy are seeking non immigrant visitor visas, normally B1/B2, which allows the recipient to travel for pleasure, or conduct limited business, while in the United States. It is important for all visa applicants to understand that a visa does not, itself, authorize entry to the United States, rather, it allows the holder to travel to the port of entry where he or she will request admission to the United States. If, for example, you are traveling from Jamaica to New York, the airline will be sure you have a valid visa in your passport before you may board your flight. When you arrive in New York, an immigration officer will review your documents, conduct an interview, and decide whether or not you will be admitted. The visa empowers you to receive that interview. While the vast majority of applicants are admitted to the U.S., the immigration officer can refuse to allow you to enter if he or she believes your purpose of travel is not in keeping with your visa category.

“I have heard many different things about the visa interview, that if you say certain things about your family and job, you are sure to get a visa”.

When you appear at the Embassy you will be interviewed by a Consular Officer. Consular Officers are U.S. Diplomats who are highly trained in visa matters. The job of the Consular Officer is to be sure that you qualify for the type of visa you seek. The most important thing you can do at your interview is to be honest and forthcoming when the officer asks you questions. Officers have access to much information from many different sources. They have also conducted many, many interviews and have seen and heard it all. Trying to mislead the officer with less than true information is a mistake.

You should not try to embellish your background or family situation. A frequently told story says that having relatives living in the United States will keep you from getting a visa. This is not true. The Consular Officer is looking for a complete picture during the interview, one that presents you as an individual with ties to Jamaica, who will not misuse a visa if one is approved. It is also important to bear in mind that officers are familiar with many aspects of life in Jamaica, for example, salaries earned by many different kinds of employees. So it is important to be truthful when the interviewing officer asks about your income.

Certain agencies or persons will claim to have “influence” at the U.S. Embassy, and promise that, for an additional fee, they can “assist” you in getting a visa. This is simply not true. While it is fine to get help in preparing the necessary forms, don’t be fooled into thinking that anyone can help you receive special treatment from the Consular Officer. Never pay money to anyone who says they can expedite your case through the system. If you are discovered misleading the Consular Officer or submitting fake documents, you will be denied a visa and you may also become permanently ineligible to receive a visa.

Most questions regarding all types of visas can be answered on the website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). It is a valuable tool, and should be used by visa applicants to understand what the requirements for each type of visa are.